Australian Government
Geoscience Australia

SAGE
SCIENCE IN AUSTRALIA
GENDER EQUITY

Geoscience Australia

Cygnet 5: Promoting cultural inclusion and curiosity

Name of Institution	Geoscience Australia
Date of Application	20 February 2026
Contact for Application	Charlie Middleton
Email	charlie.middleton@ga.gov.au
Telephone No.	+61 2 6249 9006

Australian Government
Geoscience Australia

Key Barrier: Other (please describe in Barrier description below)

Barrier type:

☐ Institution-wide Barrier

☒ Sub-group specific Barrier

Barrier description: Limited sense of inclusion and belonging for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) staff

Contents

Geoscience Australia 1
Key Barrier 5
Evidence of barrier 5
Sub-barrier 1: Limited initiatives that proactively support diversity and inclusion 5
Sub-barrier 2: Limited cultural curiosity and awareness 6
Progress (actions and outputs) 6
Sub-barrier 1: Limited initiatives that proactively support diversity and inclusion 6
Sub-barrier 2: Limited cultural curiosity and awareness 7
Outcomes 7
Sub Barrier 1: Limited initiatives that proactively support diversity and inclusion 8
Sub-barrier 2: Limited cultural curiosity and awareness 10
Impact 13
Sub-barrier 1: Limited initiatives that proactively support diversity and inclusion 13
Sub-barrier 2: Limited cultural curiosity and awareness 16
Further action 18

Program Logic Model

Key Barrier: Limited sense of inclusion and belonging for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) staff.

Sub Barriers	Progress (Actions and Outputs)	Target Outcome	Target Impact
1: Limited initiatives that proactively support diversity and inclusion *Lack of targeted initiatives to redress barriers faced by CALD staff impacts their sense of inclusion and 'cultural fit' at Geoscience Australia.*	**Foster a safe environment for authentic expression and celebration of diversity** • Introduced cultural leave entitlement in March 2024 • CALD Champion[1] established in 2019 to promote visibility of diverse leadership and cultural inclusion and curiosity activities • Celebration of culture through annual events (since 2016) and connecting staff with Department of Industry, Science and Resources language groups (2025) **Support CALD staff to build confidence in leadership and communication skills** • Funded Toastmasters membership for 10 staff (2025) **Elevate the voice of CALD staff and create opportunities for peer connections** • Launched new CALD Network in May 2025	**Outcome: CALD staff are supported to express their diversity** ✓ Increase in % of CALD staff who feel satisfied with their non-monetary employment conditions ✓ Increase in % of CALD staff who say inclusion is not a barrier to performing their best ✗ Increase in % of CALD staff who say they would recommend Geoscience Australia as a good place to work	**Impact: CALD staff have an improved sense of inclusion** ✓ CALD staff value the cultural leave policy ✓ Toastmasters participants say they feel more confident communicating at work ✓ CALD staff say the CALD Champion and CALD Network meaningfully support inclusion – CALD staff feel they have a voice in informing policies, procedures and initiatives – CALD staff say Geoscience Australia supports cultural inclusion
2: Limited cultural curiosity and awareness *Cultural blind spots and a preference for traditional norms and working styles. Limited knowledge about how to foster cultural inclusivity.*	**Build cultural curiosity and capability, shifting the focus from 'culture fit' to 'culture add'.** • Multicultural awareness training (MOSAIC) available since February 2025 • CALD Champion[2] (2019)	**Outcome: Staff have improved cultural literacy** – Increase in % of all staff who recognise and value diverse perspectives, and proactively support and promote inclusion – Increase in % of CALD staff who say diverse perspectives are recognised and valued, and inclusion proactively supported and promoted. – Increase in % of CALD staff who feel respected at work and free from bullying, harassment and discrimination.	**Impact: Cultural curiosity and awareness are embedded in the organisation** – Staff say Geoscience Australia supports cultural curiosity and awareness – CALD staff feel their colleagues have cultural curiosity and awareness

✓ **Successfully achieved:** Currently meeting target. Ongoing work to maintain impact.

– **Working towards:** Progress is being made towards target. Continued effort is needed.

✗ **Not achieved:** Target has not been met. Further action required.

[1] This activity addresses both sub-barriers.

[2] As above.

Key Barrier

Key barrier: Limited sense of inclusion and belonging for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD)[3] staff.

Sub-barrier 1: Limited initiatives that proactively support diversity and inclusion

Sub-barrier 2: Limited cultural curiosity and awareness

Evidence of barrier

Geoscience Australia's workforce is highly diverse, exceeding the Australian Public Service (APS), and the national workforce. (Table 1). There are more CALD men (58%) than women (42%) (Table 2), and most CALD staff (56%) are employed at the Executive Level 1-2 (Table 3).

Table 1: Geoscience Australia culturally diverse workforce compared to APS and national workforce

	Geoscience Australia	Australian Public Service	National workforce
% of employees who speak a Language other than English (LOTE) as their first language	28% (n=188/675) [4]	22%[5]	24%[6]

Table 2: Geoscience Australia gender balance among CALD and staff who do not identify as CALD

	Woman or female	Man or male
% of employees who speak a LOTE as their first language	42% (n=79)	58% (n=109)
% of employees who don't speak a LOTE as their first language	48% (n=232)	52% (n=253)

Table 3: Geoscience Australia balance across levels among CALD and staff who do not identify as CALD[8]

	APS level 1-6	Executive level 1 and 2
% of employees who speak a LOTE as their first language	44% (n=82)	56% (n=106)
% of employees who don't speak a LOTE as their first language	51% (n=248)	48% (n=233)

As part of our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (2021–2025), we engaged an external intercultural consultant to explore inclusion challenges through 'Listen and Learn' sessions (October 2023, with 53 staff, 60% of whom identified as CALD) and an all-staff online survey. Insights from these consultations informed the sub-barriers identified below.

[3] This application uses the term 'culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD)' in line with the Australian Public Service (APS) CALD Employment Strategy. We recognise that this term is debated and does not fully reflect the complexity of cultural identities. We recognise the cultural and linguistic diversity within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities overlaps with CALD communities' experiences, such as racism and discrimination. At the same time, we recognise that First Nations experiences encompass unique cultural, historical, and social contexts that require dedicated action. Geoscience Australia is in the early stages of establishing a First Nations Advisory Group to progress this work.

[4] Based on workforce data available, excludes staff who choose not to share this information. Data as at 30 June 2025.

[5] APS CALD Employment Strategy 2023. https://www.apsc.gov.au/publication/aps-culturally-and-linguistically-diverse-employment-strategy-and-action-plan

[6] Language spoken at home was other than English for all employed persons in Australia (15-64 years old). (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021. https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/cultural-diversity-census/2021)

[7] When applying for a role at Geoscience Australia, candidates are invited to specify their gender (which is currently shown as Male, Female, or X) in their application form. If the candidate is successful, they are then onboarded, and this information is added to their profile. For this reason, the use of the terms 'man/male' and 'woman/female' are used throughout. We acknowledge that this does not reflect the difference between gender identity and biological sex, and acknowledge the limitations this presents in the data.

[8] Data on the senior executive has not been included as numbers are too low (n=9) to maintain privacy.

Sub-barrier 1: Limited initiatives that proactively support diversity and inclusion

Consultation participants acknowledged Geoscience Australia's commitment to diversity but identified a need to strengthen cultural inclusion. CALD staff, across all APS levels, reported experiences of exclusion, racial insensitivity, and criticism of accents, which undermined confidence and performance. These behaviours reflect APS-wide issues where cultural blind spots and lack of proactive inclusion prevent staff from bringing their full selves to work and limit the APS's ability to leverage CALD talent. Geoscience Australia's Bronze assessment (2017) highlighted the need for a staff-led CALD network after the Diversity Network disbanded, leaving a gap in structured support.

Sub-barrier 2: Limited cultural curiosity and awareness

The intent to be culturally inclusive does not always translate into cultural competence. Consultation participants felt that management and leadership staff did not have the appropriate skills and knowledge to manage CALD employees inclusively. CALD staff noted that cultural blind spots and reliance on dominant norms can lead to bias, such as equating an accent with poor communication. Many staff expressed interest in building cultural competence, recognising that leadership, communication styles, and workplace norms vary across cultures.

The Listen and Learn sessions also identified that many CALD staff felt their cultural and linguistic diversity had affected their career progression at Geoscience Australia. Career progression is an acknowledged challenge across the organisation, including for CALD staff. Actions to address progression barriers are in their early stages and are therefore not evaluated in this application (Further Actions 4, 5 &6).

Progress (actions and outputs)

Due to the resourcing challenges outlined in our Institutional Context (attached separately), we focused on leveraging existing opportunities and activities. Our actions were informed by the 'Listen and Learn' sessions, our People and Culture Strategy (2028) and the APS Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Employment Strategy and Action Plan.

Sub-barrier 1: Limited initiatives that proactively support diversity and inclusion

To **foster a safe environment for authentic expression and celebration of diversity**, we:

- Formalised the cultural leave entitlement (3 days) in the APS Enterprise Agreement (EA) 2024-2027.[9] Since implementation in March 2024, 56 staff members have taken 92 instances of cultural leave (28% of 188 staff who speak a LOTE as their first language and 28% of 201 staff born overseas).
- Nominated a Senior Executive Service (SES) level CALD Champion to promote visibility of diverse leadership and cultural inclusion and curiosity activities. This action was scheduled for completion by June 2022 under the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy but was achieved in 2019.
- Encouraged participation in Department of Industry, Science and Resources language groups, leveraging shared resources to support cultural expression. The groups were promoted in Feb–Mar 2025; 10% (n=18/188) of staff who speak a LOTE as their first language joined in April 2025.

[9] Clauses on the cultural leave policy:

310. The CEO may grant up to 3 days of paid leave per calendar year for the purpose of attending significant religious or cultural obligations associated with the employees' particular faith or culture.
311. The CEO may approve additional leave for cultural purposes as miscellaneous leave, with or without pay.
312. For the avoidance of doubt, this leave does not cover cultural purposes or obligations which are eligible for paid leave under clause 306.
313. Cultural leave can be taken as part days.

- Since 2016, held promoted CALD focused staff events including panel and roundtable discussions on the benefits of diversity, and community events. In 2025, 17 staff members, both CALD and staff who don't identify as CALD, attended the Harmony Day morning tea.

We funded a 12-month Toastmasters membership for staff who speak a LOTE as their first language who wanted to **build confidence in leadership and communication skills**. Recruitment in May 2024 attracted 11 Expressions of Interest; 10 staff enrolled and received memberships. Toastmasters empowers CALD staff to strengthen their confidence in communicating with influence and engaging with others to share their expertise across the organisation and externally.

To **elevate the voice of CALD staff and create opportunities for peer connection**, we established a CALD Network. Originally planned for Q4 2020, this action was delayed due to competing priorities and resourcing limitations within Human Resources at this time. The Culture and Engagement team and CALD Champion launched the network on 21 May 2025 to align with our celebration of World Day for Cultural Diversity. The launch event drew 41 attendees, including 33 members and four members of the Senior Leadership Team. A draft Terms of Reference is under consultation.

Sub-barrier 2: Limited cultural curiosity and awareness

To **build cultural curiosity and capability**, we implemented optional cultural awareness training provided by the APS Commission. The Multicultural Organisation – Staff Awareness, Innovation and Capability (MOSAIC) [10] training helps staff understand cultural nuances and navigate unconscious bias. The CALD Champion promoted the training on the intranet in February 2025; however uptake has been low, with 2% (n=15/738) of staff completing it. MOSAIC will continue to be available as an optional training, with increased promotion (Further Action 3).

Outcomes

We used Geoscience Australia data from the APS Census to examine the outcomes of our actions. The number of respondents according to year, cultural identity and gender are outlined in Table 4[11]. The Census is completed in quarter two of each calendar year.

Table 4: Geoscience Australia APS Census participant breakdown.[12]

		2022	2023	2024	2025
CALD respondents	All respondents	536	556	532	614
	Man or male	298	301	273	298
	Woman or female	213	226	235	266
	Born overseas	171	177	-	-
	Speaks English as an additional language	118	137	-	-
	Identifies as CALD	-	-	134	165

[10] Multicultural Organisation – Staff Awareness, Innovation and Capability (MOSAIC). Self-paced content offered across the APS. Includes well-researched intercultural frameworks used in global organisations, as well as activities, questionnaires, self-reflection opportunities and downloadable toolkits to support you in growing your multicultural awareness. Part One: Growing multicultural awareness focuses on growing your multicultural awareness and is recommended for all APS staff, so everyone can contribute to creating a safe and inclusive workplace for all. Part Two: Leading multicultural teams (coming soon) supports APS 6 to Senior Executive Service (SES) leaders to champion cultural diversity and inclusion in their teams and organisations. It helps managers and leaders to lead culturally safe workplaces and prevent racial discrimination.

[11] The APS Census is a public-sector wide employee experience and engagement survey. This approach allows us to reduce consultation fatigue and use longitudinal data.

[12] Data analysis based on country of birth and first language is not available prior to 2022 due to limitations on the Qualtrics platform. The Census questions changed in 2024 to ask about identity rather than place of birth and whether English is spoken as an additional language.

[13] To preserve anonymity, where fewer than 6 people in a group completed the census this data is not shown here or in the analysis e.g. non-binary people (Gender 'X' in some datasets) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents.

Female CALD respondents	**Woman or female and speaks English as an additional language**	47	50	-	-
	Woman or female and identifies as CALD	-	-	58	70
Female respondents who don't identify as CALD	**Woman or female and speaks English only**	165	175	-	-
	Woman or female and does not identify as CALD	-	-	176	195

Sub Barrier 1: Limited initiatives that proactively support diversity and inclusion

Target outcome 1: CALD staff are supported and able to express their diversity

There has been some improvement on key indicators for this outcome, while others have remained stable. This suggests that, apart from the cultural leave, activities completed prior to quarter two 2025 have had a limited impact on supporting CALD staff across the whole organisation and enabling them to express their diversity. Further Actions like the CALD Network (Further Action 1) will be important to proactively support diversity and inclusion.

In 2022, CALD women reported less positive outcomes across several indicators compared to women who don't identify as CALD and staff overall. More recent data shows improvement, with CALD women's scores now more closely aligned with women who don't identify as CALD and the Geoscience Australia average.[14] From an intersectional perspective, these shifts suggest that CALD women may have faced compounded barriers in the past, and their recent improvements may point to some progress in addressing cultural and gender-based inequities.

Indicator: Increase in % of CALD staff who feel satisfied with their non-monetary employment conditions (Table 5, Figure 1)

Since 2022, CALD staff have reported improved satisfaction with their non-monetary employment conditions rising from 88% in 2022 to 94% in 2025. This is compared with staff who don't identify as CALD where satisfaction has remained stable (91% in 2022 to 90% in 2025). This may be related to the introduction of cultural leave in 2024.

From 2024 to 2025, the percentage of CALD women who reported satisfaction with their non-monetary conditions rose from 91% to 97%, compared with women who do not identify as CALD (92% in 2024 to 91% in 2025) (Figure 1).

[14] Staff were invited to provide reflections on this finding through feedback on the draft application, with limited response. We will continue to explore what may be contributing to this difference in conversation with staff and the CALD network.

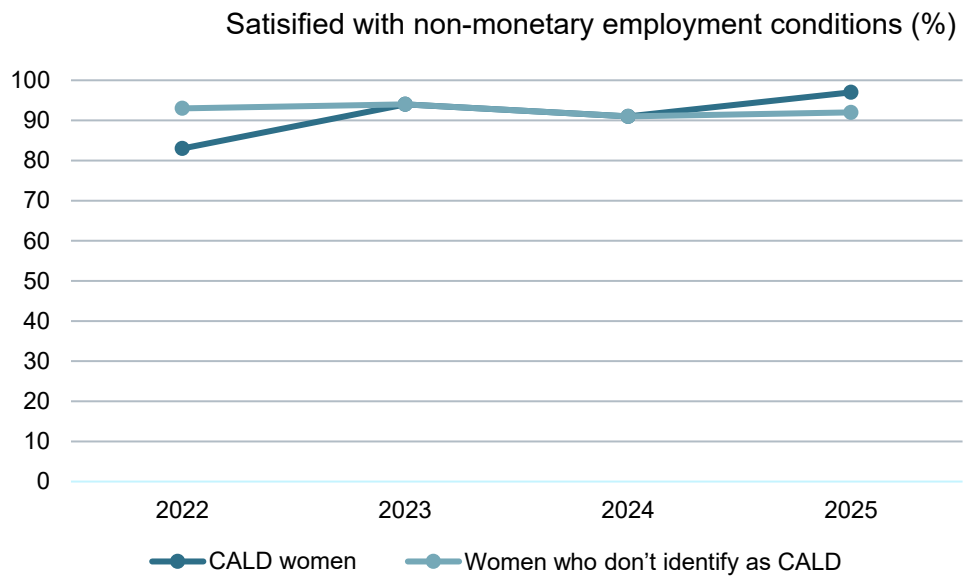

Figure 1: Satisfied with non-monetary employment conditions, Women respondents, APS Census results, 2022-2025

Indicator: Increase in % of CALD staff who say inclusion is not a barrier to performing their best (Table 5, Figure 2)

From 2022 to 2025, the percentage of CALD staff who said lack of inclusiveness in their workgroup was *not* a barrier to performing their best rose from 80% to 83%, after declining to 75% and 79% in 2023 and 2024 respectively. This is now in line with the results for staff who do not identify as CALD (86% in 2025).

Between 2024 and 2025, the percentage of CALD women who said inclusion is not a barrier to performing their best increased from 72% to 84%, to become more aligned with results for women who do not identify as CALD (89% in 2024 to 87% in 2025).

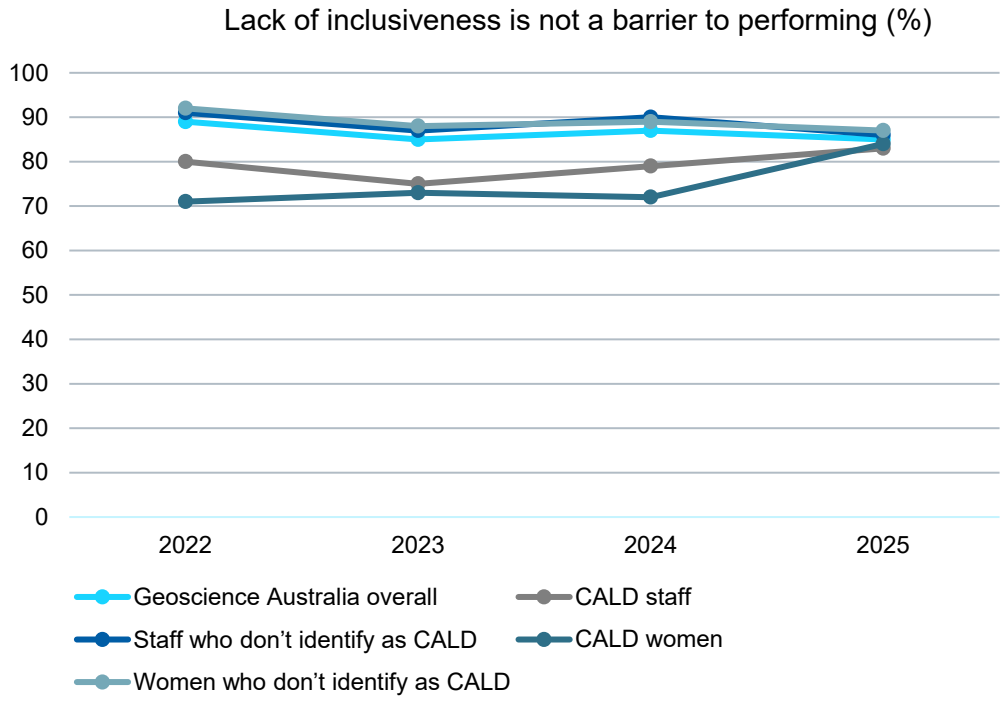

Figure 2: Lack of inclusiveness in workgroup is not a barrier to performing, APS Census results, 2022-2025

Indicator: Increase in % of CALD staff who say they would recommend Geoscience Australia as a good place to work (Table 5)

The proportion of CALD staff who would recommend Geoscience Australia as a good place to work has remained stable since 2022 (81% in 2022 to 80% in 2025), while rates among other staff increased (80% to 84%). This may reflect ongoing barriers to inclusion or belonging. However, the proportion of both CALD women and women who don't identify as CALD who would recommend Geoscience Australia as a good place to work has remained stable (81% in 2022 to 83% in 2025; and 88% in 2022 to 87% in 2025 respectively).

Table 5: CALD staff are supported and able to express their diversity, APS Census results, 2022-2025

	Satisfied with non-monetary employment conditions (%)				Lack of inclusiveness in workgroup is not a barrier to performing (%)				Would recommend Geoscience Australia as a good place to work (%)			
	2022	2023	2024	2025	2022	2023	2024	2025	2022	2023	2024	2025
Geoscience Australia overall	90	90	92	91	89	85	87	85	80	81	82	83
CALD staff	88	88	91	94	80	75	79	83	81	81	81	80
Staff who don't identify as CALD	91	89	92	90	91	87	90	86	80	80	83	84
CALD women	83	94	91	97	71	73	72	84	81	82	83	83
Women who don't identify as CALD	93	94	91	92	92	88	89	87	88	86	84	87

Sub-barrier 2: Limited cultural curiosity and awareness

Target outcome 2: Staff have improved cultural literacy

There has been varied progress on indicators for this outcome. This suggests that, while some improvements have been made, actions taken prior to the data collection in quarter two 2025 have not increased staff's cultural literacy, including how all staff seek and respond to diverse perspectives, respect others, and promote inclusion. This demonstrates the importance of the values-driven leadership model and leadership development program now being implemented (Further Action 5 & 6). These actions have a focus on cultivating belonging, incorporating diverse perspectives in decision-making, demonstrating respect for diversity; and creating a psychologically safe work environment.

Indicator: Increase in % of all staff who recognise and value diverse perspectives, and proactively support and promote inclusion (Table 6)

While nearly all staff believe a diverse workforce and inclusive culture will improve outcomes for Geoscience Australia, this has not increased over time (89% in 2022 to 88% in 2025). However, this has decreased for both CALD women and women who don't identify as CALD (94% and 95% respectively in 2022 to 91% in 2025 for both groups). The proportion of staff who say they implement feedback from people with diverse views and experiences into their work has remained stable (86% in 2022 to 87% in 2025).

Table 6: Staff who recognise and value diverse perspectives, and proactively support and promote inclusion, APS Census results, 2022-2025

	I believe a diverse workforce and inclusive culture will improve outcomes for Geoscience Australia (%)				I implement feedback from people with diverse views and experiences into my work (%)			
	2022	2023	2024	2025	2022	2023	2024	2025
Geoscience Australia overall	89	89	89	88	86	86	86	87
CALD staff	89	89	90	87	86	80	88	87
Staff who don't identify as CALD	90	88	88	88	85	86	85	87
CALD women	94	92	96	91	87	86	89	91
Women who don't identify as CALD	95	94	92	91	92	88	90	89

Indicator: Increase in % of CALD staff who say diverse perspectives are recognised and valued, and inclusion proactively supported and promoted at Geoscience Australia (Table 7)

The proportion of CALD staff who say their supervisor invites a range of views, and diverse ideas and feedback influences outcomes in their workgroup, has increased overall from 2022 to 2025 (81% to 84%; and 76% to 81% respectively). However, there has been a reduction in the proportion of CALD staff who say their supervisor actively ensures everyone can be included in workplace activities (87% to 81%) and that Geoscience Australia supports and actively promotes an inclusive workplace culture (91% to 83%) (Figure 3). This decline is also reflected in the proportion of CALD women who say their agency supports and actively promotes an inclusive workplace culture (87% to 84%).

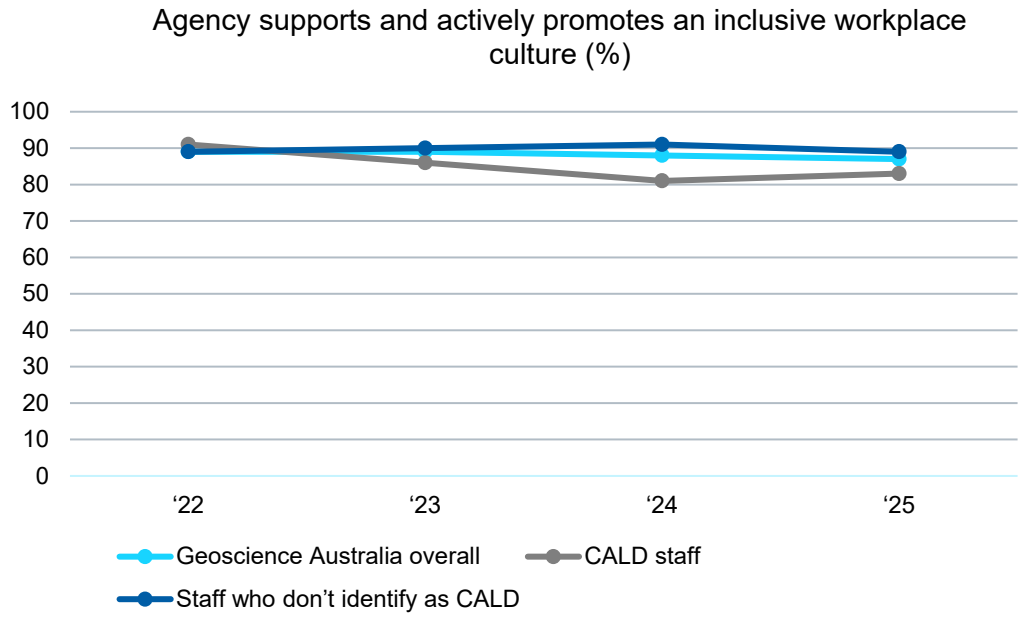

Figure 3: Agency supports and actively promotes an inclusive workplace culture, APS Census results, 2022-2025

Table 7: CALD staff who say diverse perspectives are recognised and valued, and inclusion proactively supported and promoted, APS Census results, 2022-2025

	My supervisor invites a range of views, including those different to their own (%)				Diverse ideas and feedback influence outcomes in my workgroup (%)				My supervisor actively ensures that everyone can be included in workplace activities (%)				My agency supports and actively promotes an inclusive workplace culture %)			
	'22	'23	'24	'25	'22	'23	'24	'25	'22	'23	'24	'25	'22	'23	'24	'25
Geoscience Australia overall	87	85	82	85	76	75	75	76	87	85	82	85	89	89	88	87
CALD staff	81	79	84	84	76	74	82	81	87	82	83	81	91	86	81	83
Staff who don't identify as CALD	84	85	81	84	76	74	74	74	87	85	82	86	89	90	91	89
CALD women	80	84	78	85	83	82	86	81	83	88	81	82	87	90	79	84
Women who don't identify as CALD	84	84	82	86	76	72	77	78	87	87	84	88	91	94	91	91

Indicator: Increase in % of CALD staff who feel respected at work and free from bullying, harassment and discrimination (Table 8)

Compared to 2022, CALD staff who agree they are respected by their colleagues has remained stable (81% in 2022 to 80% in 2025), although results had dropped in 2023 (76%) and 2024 (73%). Notably, staff who don't identify as CALD responded similarly (81% in 2022 to 79% in 2025), so this may speak to a wider issue at the organisation. In contrast, CALD women increased on this indicator (79% in 2022 to 84% in 2025).

Whilst most CALD staff have not experienced bullying, harassment, or discrimination, and our results remain consistent, there has been little overall change since 2022. Critically, a higher proportion of CALD staff, and CALD women, report experiencing harassment or bullying or discrimination on the basis of background or personal characteristic than their colleagues. The ongoing implementation of the Values-Driven Leadership Model and Leadership Development Program (Further Actions 5 & 6) aims to increase leaders' capabilities in creating a psychologically safe workplace, with a goal of achieving zero tolerance for any form of bullying, harassment, or discrimination.

Table 8: CALD staff who feel respected at work and free from bullying, harassment and discrimination, APS Census survey results, 2022-2025

	I receive the respect I deserve from my colleagues at work (%)				Not subjected to harassment or bullying in past 12 months (%)[15]				Not experienced discrimination on the basis of background or a personal characteristic in past 12 months (%)[16]			
	'22	'23	'24	'25	'22	'23	'24	'25	'22	'23	'24	'25
Geoscience Australia overall	81	80	78	79	88	86	87	86	91	91	92	92
CALD staff	81	76	73	80	83	80	79	84	89	82	87	89
Staff who don't identify as CALD	81	81	80	79	90	87	89	86	92	92	93	93
CALD women	79	82	82	84	70	80	72	80	Not available	Not available	82	87
Women who don't identify as CALD	82	81	80	83	88	85	88	85	87	87	91	92

[15] Note this indicator was not able to be disaggregated by gender and CALD

[16] See above.

Impact

To understand the impact of our actions for this application have had on the lived experiences of our staff, we engaged an external consultant to conduct interviews and focus groups in July 2025. We aimed for 6-12 employees in each sub-group: CALD staff; staff who don't identify as CALD and managers or supervisors.[17,18] We recruited participants across diverse genders, backgrounds, levels, and work areas to ensure a broad range of perspectives (Table 9).

Table 9: Participation in qualitative data collection[19]

	CALD staff	Staff who do not identify as CALD	Managers and supervisors	Total
Total	16	8	15	27
Women	10	<6	9	16
Men	<6	<6	<6	8
People of other genders	<6	<6	<6	<6
STEM divisions	12	6	12	21
• ***Minerals, Energy and Groundwater***	<6	<6	7	11
• ***Place and Communities***	<6	0	<6	<6
• ***Space***	<6	<6	4	7
• ***Office of the Chief Scientist***	0	0	0	0
Corporate	<6	<6	<6	6
Formal leadership responsibilities	8	6	15	15
Less than 1 year at Geoscience Australia	<6	<6	<6	<6
1 to <5 years at Geoscience Australia	6	<6	<6	10
5 to <10 years at Geoscience Australia	<6	0	<6	6
10+ years at Geoscience Australia	<6	<6	<6	<6
First Nations (self-identified)	<6	0	<6	<6
Disability (self-identified)	<6	<6	<6	<6
20 to 39 years old	<6	<6	<6	7
40 to 59 years old	8	<6	6	12
60+ years old	0	0	0	0
APS level 1-6	6	<6	<6	9
Executive level 1 and 2	9	<6	9	14
Senior executive	<6	<6	<6	<6

Sub-barrier 1: Limited initiatives that proactively support diversity and inclusion

Target Impact 1: CALD staff have an improved sense of inclusion

Overall, initiatives under this Cygnet award and the broader SAGE program have helped create a workplace where cultural inclusion and curiosity are valued. However, staff expressed that inclusion is often 'people-led', for example through individuals bringing food to celebrate major holidays, or bringing their own skills and experience

[17] Guest, G., E. Namey and M. Chen (2020). 'A simple method to assess and report thematic saturation in qualitative research'. PLoS ONE, 15:5.

[18] Managers and supervisors included CALD staff and staff who don't identify as CALD, as they shared their experience as a leader rather than their personal experience.

[19] Demographic data was not available for all participants. For example, some participants chose not to provide some information. Where there is more than 0 but less than 4 people, the cell has shows '<4' to preserve privacy.

to make their approach inclusive, as opposed to 'organisation-led'. For this reason, more organisation-level actions are needed to build confidence in Geoscience Australia's commitment to inclusion, through the CALD action plan being developed by the CALD Network (Further Action 1).

Indicator: CALD staff value the cultural leave policy

CALD staff value access to cultural leave. Some staff say it makes them feel recognised and their culture respected. Most, but not all, were aware of the leave and felt supported by managers to access cultural leave. However, since cultural leave is available across the APS, it is not viewed as a Geoscience Australia initiative. A few staff (both CALD and not identifying as CALD) noted it may unintentionally reinforce division between CALD and staff who do not identify as CALD. There is a need for clearer communication about accessing the leave, its purpose and benefits (see Further Action 2).

> *"[Cultural leave] sends a clear message that we are valued." – CALD staff member*

> *"I would be a little bit disappointed if we didn't have the cultural leave given GA is part of the Federal Government and multiculturalism is part of the key policies in Australia… It's better than if we have nothing. I love it, I appreciate it, I fully support that, I think it's very much necessary. But it's not just within [Geoscience Australia], it's for the whole federal government." – CALD staff member*

> *"The cultural leave can contribute to an us and them mentality. I think this is because people don't understand what it is, or the perception is misunderstood." – CALD staff member*

Indicator: Toastmasters participants say they feel more confident communicating at work

Toastmasters participants reported improved confidence in communication, helping them engage more effectively in their roles and career development. While the program was appreciated, some found the time commitment challenging alongside regular work.

> *"A big part of my responsibility is to convey the ideas, the outcomes of my study, of my research, of my projects to the community…I learned, for example, how to make a start, how to make yourself more calm, and how to make your voice more convincing or persuasive." – CALD staff member*

> *"[Toastmasters] is in your spare time, it's a fairly big commitment, especially when you have a family." – CALD staff member*

One manager described how they supported a Toastmasters participant to manage this commitment.

> *"I supported them by acknowledging the Toastmasters is in the evening on a Wednesday, they came late to work on a Thursday or did a bit of flex time. I loved asking them about it, but it wasn't specific to Geoscience Australia telling me how to do that." – Staff member not identifying as CALD*

The Toastmasters program will continue to be available as a professional development opportunity for staff.

Indicator: CALD staff say the CALD Champion and CALD Network meaningfully support inclusion

Consultation participants said the CALD Champion has increased visibility and fostered more nuanced conversations about CALD staff experiences. Positioned in a formal leadership role, the Champion has used their platform to challenge assumptions and promote inclusion across the agency. Staff view this leadership presence as a positive step, however, emphasise that it must be complemented by staff-led initiatives to embed cultural inclusion into everyday practice and drive sustained change.

> *"The Champion role is important because it sends a message that the agency thinks it's important to uplift everyone's cultural competency and to advocate for the [CALD] group." – Staff member not identifying as CALD*

> *"I think [the CALD Champion] has been a powerful leadership figure in this space. Her general ethos is very frank, open, accepting and very strong." – Staff member not identifying as CALD*

> *"Change comes from the staff-led networks, not from the Champion role. The Champion carries the ideas to the high level, but they need staff engagement." – CALD staff member*

Staff were very positive about the launch of the CALD Network, viewing it as a meaningful step toward greater inclusion. It offers a safe and supportive space to connect, share experiences, and build community.

> *"There has always been strong multiculturalism but people didn't feel connected to each other before. [The CALD network] gives people a platform to raise any concerns they have, share with others that might be going through something" – CALD staff member*

> *"It's a very safe group, [the CALD Champion] has set it up well, people are inclusive." – CALD staff member*

> *"If you look back a few years about gender diversity, Indigenous engagement, they have quite a strong presence and higher-level awareness among GA staff, [for example] formal activity and campaigns, but we didn't really have that. This is an opportunity for the CALD network to grow and be able to build similar things." – CALD staff member*

Further Action 1 promotes the continuation and growth of the CALD Network and CALD Champion.

Indicator: CALD staff feel they have a voice in informing policies, procedures and initiatives

CALD staff hope the new CALD Network will elevate their voices, surface challenges, and advocate for change, particularly around career progression and cultural understanding. Continued coordination and momentum are needed to ensure it drives meaningful impact (see Further Action 1).

> *"I would hope that the CALD network would bring these concerns to the surface - then GA would be able to have a system to address promotions, communications, cultural awareness. I'm really looking forward to how GA would put the systems to mitigate or address those concerns from the CALD community." – CALD staff member*

Indicator: CALD staff say Geoscience Australia supports cultural inclusion

Several staff noted that broader SAGE initiatives have helped create a generally safe and inclusive culture at Geoscience Australia. However, they felt that while infrastructure such as prayer rooms and cultural leave exists, everyday inclusive behaviours and workplace culture need improvement. Staff also reported challenges maintaining engagement in cultural inclusion activities, which are often competing for attention and time with work demands or other inclusion initiatives, such as the gender and pride networks.

> *"Overall, I think the workplace culture at GA is quite positive. GA has a really good reputation... There must be a reason for that, and the workplace culture is one of the reasons, I believe…It's inclusive for sure. There are many people from different cultural backgrounds, with different language skills." – CALD staff member*

> *"I think CALD space is definitely lagging. I think [gender and pride issues] are more palatable." – Staff member not identifying as CALD*

A significant and persistent barrier discussed by CALD staff was limited promotion and progression opportunities. Some felt 'stuck' in technical roles and unable to progress to people leadership. Some felt this was due to perceived language or communication barriers by leadership and hiring managers. This barrier resulted in feeling

their expertise, qualifications and contributions were undervalued. These perspectives reflected what we heard in the 'Listen and Learn' sessions and are a priority going forward as part of Further Actions 4, 5 and 6.

> *"I think most of the CALD people are working as technical professionals or scientists. Because of the barrier they have in terms of language, communication, they don't get promoted or see themselves as the manager. They don't get seen as managers or see themselves. People have a very strong scientific expertise or lots of scientific achievements, they don't get promoted to senior position." – CALD staff member*

> *"There is a Western expectation, particularly in Australia that you need to be confident, you need to speak up… [If people do not do that] it doesn't mean that they're actually not a brilliant leader." – Staff member not identifying as CALD*

> *"There is a narrative that a different accent is not considered 'official government language', especially when you are communicating externally. People with strong accents tend to stay at a technical level, they are not usually invited to represent the organisation." – CALD staff member*

Sub-barrier 2: Limited cultural curiosity and awareness

Target impact 2: Cultural curiosity and awareness are embedded in the organisation

Staff noted that cultural curiosity has improved, but without clear tools or guidance, inclusive behaviours are inconsistent and often depend on personal initiative. Some staff model inclusive leadership, but this is not yet widespread. We are embedding the Values-Driven Leadership Model (Further Action 5) through core systems including recruitment, performance management, and learning and development to support consistent inclusive behaviours. Targeted CALD-specific actions, including the CALD Action Plan, will support increased cultural curiosity (Further Action 1, 2, 3 & 4).

Indicator: Staff say Geoscience Australia supports cultural curiosity and awareness

Staff shared that cultural curiosity helps people understand their colleagues better and work more effectively together. Some staff said that cultural curiosity had improved at Geoscience Australia. However, they feel that cultural awareness at Geoscience Australia still relies on individual efforts or symbolic gestures, like sharing food. These activities are appreciated but seen as superficial and not enough to build genuine cultural competence.

> *"You overhear many more conversations where people are [culturally] curious these days." – Staff member not identifying as CALD*

> *"People have a fairly good understanding and interest in other cultures, when you talk to people and they say "Oh I didn't know this about your culture, your language". A huge proportion of GA is culturally diverse people, that has helped a lot. In my immediate branch I feel like there is a good understanding because there is a lot of people from different backgrounds." – CALD staff member*

> *"Expression of cultural diversity is encouraged at GA in a subtle way. We have morning teas, bring [cultural food], but there are not really [opportunities for] deeper cultural engagement." – CALD staff member*

Many staff said they don't feel supported with clear guidance or tools to manage cultural differences in the workplace and rely on their own personal aptitude. Some provided examples of how they tailor their communication style to each person, no matter their identity.

> *"Tailoring communication to who you are talking to is very important, personality, profession or culture. This is something I do anyway." – Staff member not identify as CALD*

> *"The are different communication styles as well. For example, I use a mixture of direct and indirect communication in different aspects. Generally, CALD people use indirect communication, in Australia it's very direct communication. That can sometimes be difficult as well." – CALD staff member*

Indicator: CALD staff feel their colleagues have cultural curiosity and awareness.

CALD staff identified that most staff are inclusive and positive. However, some CALD staff described ongoing communication barriers and expressed they had to be proactive in addressing 'potential points of conflict' with their colleagues. They shared stories of being misunderstood, having their accents criticised, experiencing bias or being excluded from informal activities. Some described direct experiences of discrimination. These insights show that cultural curiosity must be more than a value, it needs to be embedded through training, leadership, and everyday practice.

> *"I have been very fortunate with senior leaders. They do care about my cultural differences. Most of the time my supervisors are white men or white women, but they do care." – CALD staff member*

> *"I had a really tough manager one time. They pointed out my speech wasn't fluent." – CALD staff member*

> *"You need to have respect and cultural sensitivity, understanding and capability and safety regardless of who you think you're in a room with. And that's something that GA doesn't do well." – Staff member not identifying as CALD*

> *"(We need more) support for managers. Non-CALD managers and CALD managers supporting people from a different culture." – Staff member not identifying as CALD*

This work highlights both progress and ongoing challenges in fostering cultural inclusion at Geoscience Australia. Initiatives like the CALD Network and cultural leave have improved visibility and support, but embedding genuine inclusion requires sustained leadership, clear communication, and everyday action. Staff value recent efforts, but further systemic change is needed to address barriers to progression and ensure all voices are heard. Moving forward, actions such as embedding the Values-Driven Leadership Model, delivering the Leadership Development Program, adopting initiatives developed through the APS-wide SES CALD Network and strengthening the GA CALD Network are essential for building a truly inclusive and culturally curious workplace.

Further actions

Our further actions take a two-pronged approach to building a genuinely inclusive workplace. Our People and Culture Strategy (2024) identified a need to increase leadership capability across the organisation to create a psychologically safe environment for all, including CALD staff. The Values-Driven Leadership Model and the Leadership Development Program aim to uplift inclusive leadership for all staff, not just CALD staff, by cultivating belonging, demonstrating respect for diversity, and creating psychologically safe environments. These actions will support inclusion through leadership capability as well as core organisational systems like learning and development, reward and recognition, recruitment and performance management.

This organisation-wide approach must be complemented by targeted CALD-specific actions to ensure intersectional outcomes are achieved. This includes actions resulting from learnings in this application: promoting the MOSAIC training and cultural leave. The most important further action is the ongoing development of the CALD Network, and initiatives led by and developed in consultation with the Network, such as the CALD Action Plan.

Action name or reference	Rationale or evidence	Actions and outputs (description)	Timeframe	Implementation and delivery responsibilities	Desired outcomes, targets or success indicators
1. GA CALD staff network	• Consultation for this application highlighted the value of the CALD Network as a meaningful step toward greater inclusion. • CALD staff said they want the network to be a safe and supportive place to connect, and that it will elevate their voices and advocate for change. • The CALD Network is an opportunity for consultation on any organisational initiative, to make it more appropriate and impactful for CALD staff.	• Draft Terms of Reference for the network will be published for staff consultation. Following consultation, the governance of the network including Chair and secretariat functions will be established. This will support the longevity and self-determination of the network. • The CALD Network to develop a CALD action plan with support from Human Resources, aligning to the APS CALD Employment Strategy.	June 2026	**Implementation:** CALD Network CALD Champion Human Resources **Accountable for action delivery:** CALD Champion	• CALD staff have an improved sense of inclusion, as measured by APS Census data and internal surveys.
2. Promote cultural leave	• Consultation for this application identified a need for clearer communication about accessing the leave, its purpose and benefits.	• Post on the intranet with an update on the cultural leave available through the EA, how it can be accessed, its purpose and benefits.	By end of 2025	**Implementation:** Human Resources **Accountable for action delivery:** Chief People Officer	• Increase in number of people accessing cultural leave
3. Promote MOSAIC training	• Low uptake of MOSAIC training so far • APS Census results and qualitative data for this application show an ongoing need to improve cultural curiosity and awareness.	• Promote MOSAIC training as part of learning and development.	June 2026	**Implementation:** Human Resources	• Increase in number of people completing training. • GA staff build cross-cultural competency and curiosity.

Geoscience Australia Cygnet 5: Promoting cultural inclusion and curiosity

Action name or reference	Rationale or evidence	Actions and outputs (description)	Timeframe	Implementation and delivery responsibilities	Desired outcomes, targets or success indicators
4. APS SES CALD Network actions	• Consultation for this application identified a need for more organisation-led inclusion activities and to address progression barriers. • There are opportunities to implement actions currently being developed by the APS wide SES CALD Network, particularly those relating to career progression.	• GA CALD Network and Executive review actions when they are developed and endorse for inclusion in the CALD action plan if appropriate (see Action 1).	June 2026	**Accountable for action refinement and delivery:** CALD Champion CALD Network **Implementation:** Human Resources	• Decrease in the differences between CALD staff and staff who don't identify as CALD, as measured by APS Census data and internal surveys.
5. Values-Driven Leadership Model	• The Values-Driven Leadership Model (the Model) was developed as part of the People and Culture Strategy 2028 to embed leadership at all levels, recognising that leadership is defined by behaviour and values, not just position. • Consultation for this Cygnet application reinforced the importance of embedding values-driven leadership at all levels to support psychological safety and inclusion.	• The Model was developed in mid-2025. It includes a Leadership Capability Framework and organisational Values and Behaviours, including 'cultivates belonging'. • The Model has been embedded across the organisation within learning and development and performance management, and will be embedded within recruitment and the reward and recognition program. • The Model is a focus of the Leadership Development Program (Action 2).	July 2025 onwards (ongoing)	**Implementation:** Human Resources **Accountable for action delivery:** CEO	• A unified, values-driven culture where leadership is demonstrated by all staff, regardless of role. • Improved staff engagement, inclusion, and satisfaction, as measured by APS Census data and internal surveys.
6. Leadership Development Program	• The Leadership Development Program was established to enhance leadership and management capability, particularly in supporting psychological safety and integrity for all staff, including CALD staff. • The program also supports career progression for EL2 staff who are often technical experts. • Staff consultations and feedback for this application reinforced the need for leaders to be equipped to support inclusion, and model values-driven behaviours.	• Mandatory, targeted leadership training for employees at the EL2 level and above.	June 2026	**Implementation:** Human Resources **Accountable for action delivery:** CEO	• Leaders demonstrate increased capability in inclusive, values-driven leadership. • Improved staff perceptions of leadership, as measured by APS Census data and internal surveys.